

CITIZENS FOR BIODIVERSITY PROFILE



You are a dedicated member of Citizens for Biodiversity, a group interested in restoring and preserving diverse bird and plant habitats in your community. Some of your members are avid bird watchers and others are plant lovers.

- Because most ecosystems build a foundation on the plant community, you strive to protect native plants as a way to maintain biodiversity. For some of your members this is the most important part of your work.
- You also recognize birds are sensitive indicators of ecosystem health, and you are concerned about how growing deer populations are affecting the local bird habitat and populations. According to some of your members protecting bird species should be your group's highest priority.
- Your club funded an ecologist to study the effects of urban deer on the local plant and bird communities. Though you enjoy seeing deer, the study revealed the disappearance of 10 rare wildflower species and 14 other vital plant species within the town's park and along the nearby urban fringe. Deer overbrowsing has removed nearly all vegetation from ground level up to five feet and many bird populations have been negatively impacted.
- Using plant exclosures within the town park, your ecologist discovered that unmanaged deer populations have so greatly altered the plant community and bird habitat that it may take 20 years to restore the area to its natural state.
- You are aware the average deer eats six or more pounds of food a day. Multiplied by 365 days and approximately 500 deer, that amounts to nearly over *million* pounds of local plants (and bird habitat) consumed by deer in your area each year.

Consider these questions as you debate management proposals during your town meeting:

- How will different solutions work to restore the plant and bird communities?
- How can different solutions improve the ecosystem for plants, birds, people and wildlife?
- What adjustments in a plan could immediately help the birds and plants? In the long run?
- What role could your interest group play in each of the proposed solutions?

WEB RESEARCH SITES

- Botanical Society (www.paflora.org)
- National Audubon Society (www.audubon.org)
- International Association of Fish & Wildlife Agencies—Report titled “Bears in the Backyard, Deer in the Driveway” (www.iafwa.org/bearsbackyardfacts.html)